

The invention in which an exclusive right is claimed is defined by the following:

1. A method for integrating online bidding over a communications network and onsite bidding at a location where an auction is being held, without requiring transmission of streaming video or audio data to online bidders from the location, comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing a database that includes information about items being auctioned;
- (b) enabling prospective bidders who are online to access the database over the communications network prior to entering a bid;
- (c) communicating bidding information to and from:
  - (i) bidders who are onsite at the location of the auction;
  - and
  - (ii) bidders who are online, over the communication network;
- (d) enabling bidders who are online to transmit bids to the onsite auction over the communications network;
- (e) automatically determining a highest bid from among each bid transmitted over the communication network by bidders who are online; and
- (f) determining a purchaser of an item being auctioned based upon a highest bid made by a bidder who is either onsite or online.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the bidding information includes at least one of an identification of the item currently being auctioned, an identification of any current highest bidder, an indication of any current highest bid amount, and an asking bid amount.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein bids submitted by bidders who are online each include a bid amount, and an identification of the bidder who is making the bid.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of displaying at the location of the auction the current highest bid and an identification of a highest bidder, who is either online or onsite.

5. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling pre-registration of bidders who are online.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling bidders who are onsite to register a bid for an item electronically.

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein the step of communicating bidding information comprises the step of transmitting packetized data over the communication network.

8. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling bidders who are online to participate in one or more of a plurality of auctions occurring on different channels accessible over the communication network, each channel being associated with a different set of items to be auctioned.

9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of providing a plurality of auction administrative functions in software used to integrate online bidding and onsite bidding, said plurality of auction administrative functions including at least one of:

- (a) registering bidding participants in an auction;
- (b) providing invoicing statements identifying each item purchased by a successful bidder in one or more auctions, costs associated with the purchase of each item, any adjustment to the costs, and a total amount due;
- (c) accumulating data regarding bidders and items sold at an auction; and
- (d) providing advertising that is displayed to bidders who are online.